

## DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE—II

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We are in an age of re-distribution of wealth and the re-distribution of power; but we have not reached the age when the grinding power of despotism and injustice have ceased. And we have lost all sense of orderly living. We have kicked out the old order; we have not worked out a new order. Ours is an age of sublime disorder.

The above quotation, taken from the syndicated column of one of our more authoritative political commentators, has a twofold pertinence. With an economy of words, it presents a scathing indictment of modern society. With an insistence upon disorder as the distinguishing note of our age, it offers an accurate diagnosis of current political, social and economic maladjustment. Employed here, it is important because, as the impartial witness of a contemporary, it both serves as a succinct statement of fact and provides a forceful, though indirect, confirmation of a Catholic thesis.

Forty-seven years ago, Pope Leo XIII anticipated the fact in *Rerum Novarum*. Pius XI bears eloquent testimony to its realization:

Society today still remains in a strained and therefore unstable and uncertain state, being founded on classes with contradictory interests and hence opposed to each other, and consequently prone to enmity and strife.<sup>1</sup>

The thesis is the doctrine of Catholic Corporativism. Implied in *Rerum Novarum*, it is given classic definition in *Quadragesimo Anno*:

There cannot be question of any perfect cure, except this opposition be done away with, and well-ordered members of the social body come into being anew, vocational groups namely, binding men together not according to the position they occupy in the labor market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society.<sup>2</sup>

It is our purpose to expose the fact as a radical departure from the traditional Christian ethos, and to develop briefly the thesis by presenting the basic principles of that Christian Corporate Order towards

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<sup>1</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, p. 27. National Catholic Welfare Conference pamphlet, (Washington, 1931).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

which mankind must sincerely move, if it is to emerge from the "sublime disorder" of the present.

The very term "Corporate," as applied to the Christian social order, has the force of describing its structural aspect and of differentiating it both from the Liberal-Individualistic concept of society and from that of Totalitarianism. Society, according to the Christian thesis, is not merely an aggregation of individuals, realized by a certain fortuitous juxtaposition of these same individuals. Nor is it a vast, lifeless machine, achieving artificial unity solely from the fact that it is both the creature and the servile instrument of an omnipotent State. Rather it is a vital, organic whole, composed of different individuals and groups of individuals duly proportioned among themselves, operating for a common end, and coordinated in their necessarily diverse functions just as the interrelated parts of the human composite. A "unity arising from the apt arrangement of a plurality of objects" results from the "active cooperation of each part acting according to its specific nature and according to its proper function." The necessary distinction between private activity and corporate activity is made by St. Thomas, thus:

A whole which is a civil multitude has only a unity of order, according to which it is not something perfectly and simply one. And therefore any part of this whole is able to perform an operation which is not the operation of the whole, e. g. a soldier in the army has functions which do not pertain to the whole army. Nevertheless, the totality of the whole has an operation which is not proper to any part but which belongs to the whole, e.g. the conflict of the whole army and the pulling of a boat is the work of all those cooperating.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident, then, that the fundamental principle of Corporativism, the organic structure of society, is based ultimately upon the full acceptance of the *individual-social* nature of Man. Recognizing the inviolability of human personality together with those inalienable rights which are inseparable from that personality, Corporativism nevertheless insists that the private good of the individual must be brought into accord with, and, under certain circumstances, subordinated to the common good.

Following the *via media* between the extremes of exaggerated Individualism (in its failure to evaluate the social nature of Man) and an enervating Collectivism (in its negation of individual rights), the doctrine of the Christian Corporate Society offers an adequate solution to the problem of permanent social rehabilitation. Its ad-

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<sup>3</sup> *Ethicorum Aristotelis*, 1, lect. 1, par. 5.

equacy, in the last analysis, is derived from the fact that it presupposes the truth about Man. As Christopher Dawson puts it:

The Christian theory of man and society involves two great principles which superficial observers often regard as mutually exclusive and irreconcilable with one another. The first of these is the principle of Transcendence—the idea of a supernatural society and a supernatural end of history. . . . And secondly, there is the principle of the dependence of human society and human law on the divine order; the idea of a law of nature to which all social and individual behaviour must conform and which rests in the last resort on the eternal Reason of God, the source and bond of the whole cosmic order.<sup>4</sup>

In the first part of this paper an attempt was made to present a brief synthesis of the Christian concept of Man. It was stated that Man, capable of purposive action, tends always towards a known end, his perfect felicity in the fulfillment of his highest desires. But as this goal, the possession of God in the Beatific Vision, is possible only with death, he finds relative happiness in this life, primarily through the knowledge and love of God and the practice of virtue and secondarily, in the goods of the body and an amicable association with other men. Imperfect beatitude is demanded by Catholic social teaching as the right of all men. The universal realization of this right is the direct purpose of the Corporate Society.

As long as the Catholic Church was dominant in Christian Europe, the supernatural destiny of Man was the pivotal fact around which every individual and social activity revolved. Because this life was regarded as but a probationary interlude, during which Man must prepare by virtue for the perfect beatitude of the Beatific Vision, organic society was conceived of as the essential instrument for the realization of this objective. Christianity shaped the conscience of Western man and, though it allowed, nay encouraged, the fullest development of his personality, yet it constantly reminded him that "we have not here an abiding city." It taught him that he is not an autonomy, self-sufficient, but rather that he is a creature of God with duties and correlative rights, which have their foundation in the Eternal Law. Then came the Protestant revolt and, with it, a new attitude toward God and Man.

It would be bad history to maintain that Protestantism, in its origins at least, denied either of the two fundamental principles of traditional Christian theology, i. e., "the supernatural destiny of Man and the dependence of society on the divine order." But it is an undeniable fact that, by its appeal to private judgment as the criterion

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<sup>4</sup> *Religion and the Modern State* (London, 1935), p. 129.

of both dogma and morals, in its divorcing of faith from good works, and by its revolutionary attitude toward material wealth, it prepared the way for, and eventually sanctioned, that full-blown Liberalism which set out to emancipate Man from bondage to a personal God and succeeded only in establishing him in hopeless slavery to impersonal economic forces.

Liberalism, as a philosophy of life, is based upon the principle that "it is contrary to the natural, innate, inalienable right and liberty and dignity of Man to subject himself to an authority, the root, rule, measure and sanction of which is not in himself." Translated from purely academic theory to the practical order, Liberalism became the cornerstone of the *laissez-faire* economics of Industrial Capitalism, the apostles of which were chiefly Adam Smith, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill. These gentlemen formulated and taught the theory that all relations in human life are harmonious, and therefore, nothing more is needed than the fullest liberty in commerce to the exclusion of all artificial intervention of laws, labor unions, etc. Even the welfare and educational efforts in behalf of the workingman are unnecessary. In other words, social and economic life were to be interpreted in terms of Darwin's biological dictum—the survival of the fittest.

During the interval from the sixteenth century to our own, the doctrines of Rugged Individualism and its natural progeny, Industrial Capitalism, thoroughly permeated Western civilization. And with the ascendancy of Protestant culture and the consequent fruition of unrestrained competition came the canonization of the concentrators of wealth as the "rich, the wise and the good." Father Amintore Fanfani states the fact truthfully when he says:

Protestantism encouraged capitalism inasmuch as it denied the relationship between earthly action and eternal recompense. From this point of view there is no real difference between the Lutheran and Calvinistic currents, for while it is true that Calvin linked salvation to arbitrary divine predestination, Luther made it dependent on Faith alone. Neither of the two connected it with works.<sup>5</sup>

Industrial Capitalism, as an economic system and as a philosophy of action, has given the distinctive tone to modern society. As an *economic system*, in which private wealth is used either by the individual acting as an individual or by a group of individuals acting collectively, Industrial Capitalism may be morally just. As a *practical application of the creed of Liberal Individualism* it is utterly condemned, for it is predicated on a denial of Man's individual-social

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<sup>5</sup> *Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism* (London, 1935), p. 205.

nature and results in the mechanistic rather than the organic structure of society. It has been the too general acceptance of this "creed" as a philosophical basis for a *modus agendi* that has culminated in the social disorder of today.

By way of summarizing all that has been said in the preceding paragraphs of this section, the following excerpts from the authoritative pen of Father Von Nell-Breuning are particularly appropriate:

As long as society was a well-arranged organism, its structure and form were determined organically by the forces of life. If, however, society has become a big tub into which the mass of millions socially detached and atomized individuals has been thrown in confusion, then the organic forces are replaced by inorganic, mechanical forces. Among these, however,—if we wish to maintain the simile—one externally organizing force dominates, gravity. As a result of prolonged shaking the heavier particles will move to the bottom, the lighter ones to the top; so too it is with fretfully agitated society. We need only ask which force in this instance takes the place of gravity. The answer is not difficult. Experience shows us that *the lack of means is the leaden weight that attaches itself to man's feet, pulling him into the depths of the economic void, while ownership is the force that keeps him economically afloat.*

As a result, we have at present two distinctly separated social groups which, *externally are located above each other, and internally are no longer united by the interchange of living influence.* These two layers are *the owners of means of production, who demand labor on the market, on the one side, and the wage-earners without the means of production offering their labor, on the other hand.* . . . They are representatives of interests *antagonistic in principle*, which seem to be destined to wage an endless war; *not because they hate each other, not because they bear a grudge against each other, but because their objective interests are antagonistic.*<sup>6</sup>

### III

Throughout the above section, the term *common good* was used to indicate the ultimate goal of organic society. Because it is this collective striving for a common end that gives unity to the Corporate Order, an understanding of its profound significance and of its application to the doctrine of Christian Corporativism is of paramount importance.

Good is defined as common by way of opposition to the private good of each individual. However, this opposition does not connote an exclusion of private good, for it is of the essence of the common good to overflow into the private good of the individual. In the last analysis, it is called common because it is superior to and more extensive than private good. Moreover, it is not just an accumulation of

<sup>6</sup> *Reorganization of Social Economy* (Milwaukee, 1936), pp. 213-14. Italics ours).

particular goods, but rather the good or felicity of society as a whole. Now this temporal felicity, conformable to Man's rational nature and duly subordinated to Eternal Beatitude, consists ultimately in the practice of those virtues which should be operative for the enjoyment of perfect human life, either contemplative or active; and proximately in peace and progress which are attained by internal and external harmony and by a certain sufficiency of external goods, the use of which is necessary in a properly constituted society.<sup>7</sup>

The realization of the common good is the function of what St. Thomas calls legal justice. The exercise of this latter virtue in all its amplitude rests primarily with the person or persons in whom the civil authority resides.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the king, taught the law of God, should have for his principal concern the means by which the multitude subject to him may live well. Now this concern is threefold: first of all, to establish a virtuous life in the multitude subject to him; second, to preserve it, once established; and third, having preserved it, to promote its greater perfection.

To establish virtuous living in a multitude three things are necessary. First of all, that the multitude be established in the unity of peace. Second, that the multitude thus united in the bond of peace, be guided to good deeds. For, just as a man can do nothing well unless unity within his members be presupposed, so a multitude of men which lacks the unity of peace is hindered from virtuous action by the fact that it fights against its very existence as a group. In the third place, it is necessary that there be at hand a sufficient supply of things required for proper living, procured by the ruler's efforts. Then when virtuous living is set up in society by the efforts of the king, it remains for him to look to its conservation.<sup>9</sup>

In applying the principles outlined above to modern society, the genius of the Papal program is fully manifest. There is no sentimental advocacy of a return to the economic system of the Middle Ages. Nor do either of the Pontiffs envisage an illusory Utopia. Approaching the problem with a realism informed by the cumulative wisdom of two thousand years and with a consciousness of their divinely-conferred authority, they take society as they find it. And they find it divided into two distinct and antagonistic classes—the possessors and the dispossessed, “the haves and the have-nots,” with the labor market its center. The conflicting forces face one another. On the one side are the owners of the means of production—raw materials, factories, wealth; on the other, the vast mass of laborers, of-

<sup>7</sup> cf. *De Regimine Principum*, lib. I, c. 14-15; lib. II, c. 2-15. (Translation by Dr. G. B. Phelan, Toronto, Canada, 1935).

<sup>8</sup> *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 58, arts. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> *De Regimine Principum*, lib. I, c. 15.

fering their brawn and their brains as commodities to be bought for a wage.

Of course we know labor cannot really be a commodity in any social economic organization because it is by its nature, the personal effort of a man. But it can be considered a commodity insofar as supply of and demand for labor take place in a manner similar to that regarding any other commodity; also insofar as the *price* paid for labor, namely the wages, regulates itself through the barter of those offering and those asking for it; in other words, according to the ill-famed so-called law of "supply and demand."<sup>10</sup>

As the fundamental condition for social rehabilitation, Pope Pius demands "an organic rearrangement of society." The present mechanized situation, resulting from the opposition of the two classes on the labor market, must give way to an organic unity based upon the grouping of individuals according to professions or vocations. In other words, the *work* performed by an individual, rather than the fact that he labors for wages or owns means of production, places him in a social as well as in an economic category. Furthermore, the *kind* of work, rather than the *volume*, is both the essence of the corporate idea of performance and the determining factor in the re-alignment of groups. Concerning this Papal principle, Father Von Nell-Breuning makes this pertinent observation:

But why a *corporate* organization according to vocations? This seems to be a fine distinction. Corporate, because these social groups, forming themselves according to vocational relations, must be developed into true and real organs of the social body. They are more than merely the total number of people who happen to apply themselves to a particular vocational activity at the moment. They must be permanent *corporate bodies*, vocational groups, not merely in a statistical sense, but vocational groups in the legal sense.<sup>11</sup>

In clarifying the rather novel concept of vocational groups, the Holy Father indicates an analogy with the state:

For as nature induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite into municipalities, so those who practice the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, combine into vocational groups. These groups, in a true sense autonomous, are considered by many to be, if not essential to civil society, at least its natural and spontaneous development.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Von Nell-Breuning, Rev. Oswald, *Reorganization of Social Economy*, p. 216.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221. (Italics ours).

<sup>12</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, p. 27.

Moreover, the Corporate Order, as outlined in the Encyclicals, postulates a twofold division of these functional groupings, i. e., into *territorial units*, determined by the geographical area in which they operate, and *strictly vocational groups*, specified by the type of work pursued in the individual professions. A mutual dependence upon and penetration of one another stabilize the resulting whole and render the Corporate Order more secure, just as the vertical and horizontal girders of a skyscraper give it increased resistance to the vagaries of the elements.

The bond of unity, the force that coordinates the common activities of the whole in striving for the perfection of the Corporate Order, is thus described by Pope Pius :

A bond of union is provided on the one hand by the *common effort of employees and employers of one and the same group* joining forces to produce goods or to give service; on the other hand, by the *common good* which all groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV

At this point, these thoughts might suggest themselves. "Why should the Church, whose office is essentially supernatural, concern itself with mundane things? After all, religion is of the spirit, while the function of economics is to operate in the market-place, in the sanctuaries of high finance, and about the conference tables of international diplomacy. Isn't it incongruous that the Vicar of Christ—of the gentle Saviour, Who insisted that His kingdom was not of this world—propose an ambitious program for the re-orientation of the purely material order? And why should priests take to the pulpit, the radio and the platform in an effort to put this program into action? Surely there's something illogical about all this."

The answer is simple. Reduced to its essentials, it is just this. Man is composed of a body and a soul. The body is corruptible. The soul, however, of its very nature is incorruptible and immortal. After death—the separation of the body and the soul—the body returns to the earth from which it came, until it is reunited with the soul at the general resurrection of the Last Day. But as long as the immortal soul is joined in life to the mortal body, it is dependent upon that body for the proper operations of its rational nature.

Since the Church is interested, primarily, in the salvation of souls and since the salvation of the souls of the generality of men depends upon the proper dispositions of their lower nature—their bodies—the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28. (Italics ours).

Vicar of Christ, like his Master before him, has compassion upon the multitude. He insists upon an organic re-alignment of the social order because it is by this means that those conditions can be realized and made permanent whereby mankind is assured of a sufficiency of external goods and the consequent peace of ordered living.

Finally, it might be asked, "Isn't this Papal design for the future—this Corporate Society—hopelessly idealistic? Doesn't it require such a radical change of heart and mind that it assumes the proportions of an impossible revolution?" The answer, in both instances, is "No." And it is "No" because already this peaceful revolution—the gradual return to Christian social principles—is upon us. However much we may condemn the totalitarian abuses involved, Salazar, in Portugal, has astonished the world with the almost miraculous revivification of his nation under a corporate regime; Franco, in Nationalist Spain, has given definite corporate form and spirit to his new government; in Mussolini's Italy, the form of Corporativism, if not its true spirit, is manifest; and in what was once Austria, Schuschnigg had carried out the Corporate ideals of Dolfuss, his predecessor, until the *Anschluss* submerged both him and his nation in the Third Reich. Elsewhere the revolution gathers momentum. Perhaps only the cataclysm of another world war can completely destroy the old order and dispose things properly for the universal acceptance of the new. At any rate, the revolution is a fact, even though the evening of the old order seems unduly prolonged. For, as Hilaire Belloc so dramatically states it:

It is always so in the great revolutions of history; before they appear upon the surface they are running in the hearts of men, unrecognized, sometimes not recognized at all, but on the move. It is like the tide which you may see in some dredged harbors, where the flood runs along the bottom of the fairway while on the top of the water the ebb still flows till long after its due hour for turning.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Charles I, King of England* (Hilaire Belloc, 1933) London.